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25 November 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: CIA Participation in COINS

1. The Executive Director has informed me of the proposed CIA decision to adjust the level of CIA participation in COINS and has furnished to me the information which formed the basis for this decision. I have examined this proposal carefully from a community point of view and on the basis of this examination recommend that you sign the attached letter to Admiral Gayler. The reasons for this recommendation follow.

2. As you know, the COINS Experiment project has been under way since September 1965 following a recommendation from the PFIAB. The first communications link between computers at NSA and DIA was installed and successfully tested in February, 1967 and CIA and NPIC joined the network some eighteen months later. Development work continued on the technical aspects of COINS and in April 1968 the Director, National Security Agency became the Executive Agent for COINS and took over responsibility for the experiment under general guidance from USIB and with participation of the member agencies. This work continues today.

3. While it was evident by April, 1969, that COINS was technically feasible there was very limited agreement among the agencies involved in the experiment as to what substantive intelligence material required handling by an on-line system such as COINS. The question of the possible uses for COINS has been present from the beginning. The PFIAB in their original recommendation had named biographics as probably requiring community-wide on-line access. After extensive and exhaustive study by a USIB committee and by the COINS working group, it was determined that biographics was not a suitable COINS file. In order to allow the technical development of COINS to proceed a number of files

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were nominated for COINS use with no other qualification than that they were already in machine form and could be used for the technical development of the experiment without much trouble or cost. A few files--two or three--were found to be of some use between NSA and DIA. Very recently a CIA index file has found some community interest. Otherwise, only very limited requirements for substantive intelligence information to be handled by COINS on a community-wide basis have been developed.

25X1 4. During this period CIA has participated in the COINS experiment while at the same time proceeding with the development of systems to satisfy their own internal requirements. Studies continued both within the Agency and in the NSA directed COINS Management Group in an attempt to develop a CIA requirement for an on-line COINS type system. Much processed information is required, of course, from other members of the intelligence community. For instance, there is information contained in a number of [redacted] files from DIA, SAC, USAREUR, etc. which is desired by CIA analysts. Information contained in the DIA maintained [redacted] is also required, and there are other examples. CIA does not, however, require this information on an immediate or urgent basis, nor is the information always useable in the form in which it is maintained for other, non-CIA, purposes. On the other hand, DoD agencies do have such a requirement and a COINS-type system should satisfy their need for rapid access to certain intelligence files. Also, NPIC files are of broad community interest and should be made more readily available.

25X1 5. There is a limited CIA requirement to maintain some capability to work with the COINS network, e.g., the USIB approved IGCP requirement for NSA to maintain [redacted] on an on-line basis. 25X1 There probably will be other requirements in the future. The CIA proposal to retain a capability to have access to COINS files is therefore supported. Also, the work of the IHC in improving all aspects of the exchange of information will be closely monitored by this office.

[redacted] 25X1  
JOHN A. BROSS  
D/DCI/NIPE

Attaches:

1. Letter to Adm. Gayler
2. Letter to Adm. Anderson